

U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
 POLLUTION/SITUATION REPORT  
 Las Conchas Wildfires - Removal Polrep



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
 Region VI

**Subject:** POLREP #2  
 progress  
 Las Conchas Wildfires

Santa Fe, NM  
 Latitude: 35.5705630 Longitude: -106.0873716

**To:** Ragan Broyles, Superfund Division  
 Dana Tulis, U.S. EPA HQ  
 Art Volmer, NM

**From:** Warren Zehner, OSC

**Date:** 7/2/2011

**Reporting Period:**

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

<b>Site Number:</b>	06BJ	<b>Contract Number:</b>	
<b>D.O. Number:</b>		<b>Action Memo Date:</b>	
<b>Response Authority:</b>	CERCLA	<b>Response Type:</b>	Emergency
<b>Response Lead:</b>	EPA	<b>Incident Category:</b>	
<b>NPL Status:</b>	Non NPL	<b>Operable Unit:</b>	
<b>Mobilization Date:</b>	6/27/2011	<b>Start Date:</b>	6/27/2011
<b>Demob Date:</b>		<b>Completion Date:</b>	
<b>CERCLIS ID:</b>		<b>RCRIS ID:</b>	
<b>ERNS No.:</b>		<b>State Notification:</b>	
<b>FPN#:</b>		<b>Reimbursable Account #:</b>	

1.1.1 Incident Category

Emergency Response.

1.1.2 Site Description

Concerns about the impact of Las Conchas Wildfire impacting the Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) and potential releases of radioactive waste and materials into surrounding communities. The cause of the fire is still being investigated. The fire started south west of LANL and traveled in a direction that threatened LANL. LANL was closed to all but essential personnel. The city of Los Alamos was evacuated. Fire is currently largest in NM history, approximately 114,000 acres involved.

The fire is being contained and is presenting a much lower threat to LANL. The 'black areas' and fire breaks that have been created since the Cerro Grande fire from 11 years ago have been effective in protecting the LANL property. The front of the fire has passed LANL, although fire still is adjacent to the LANL perimeter. Conditions continued to improve, re-population plan for Los Alamos is being developed, no firm date for re-population has been established, current best estimate is 07/04.

#### 1.1.2.1 Location

The location is the area surrounding the LANL. That includes several tribal lands, the cities of Los Alamos and White Rock, National Forests and Monuments.

#### 1.1.2.2 Description of Threat

The POTENTIAL threat is from radioactive material that could be released due to the impact of wildfires. There are legacy sites within LANL where soil is contaminated with radioactive isotopes. A firestorm within the wildfire could entrain the contamination and move it offsite. A wildfire without the firestorm has a lesser potential for lifting the contamination, not enough energy.

Within LANL property is a well known area (Area G) that is the location of containerized radioactive waste. This area is maintained and operated by LANL. Engineering controls are in place to prevent fire effecting the stored wastes including specially designed casks, shields, 'pigs', solidification, as well as fire breaks.

Another potential threat is from the facilities on LANL that use radioactive materials. Since the control of these materials is structured, the potential threat from these facilities is less.

#### 1.1.3 Preliminary Removal Assessment/Removal Site Inspection Results

Threat to LANL property is waining, aggressive protective measures appear to be holding the fire outside the LANL area.

Two rounds of air samples have been collected. Analytical results will be received within days.

ASPECT has completed four missions around the perimeter of the fire, no radiation levels significantly above the background levels were detected.

## 2. Current Activities

### 2.1 Operations Section

#### 2.1.1 Narrative

EPA technical assistance contractor (START) and EPA's Radiological Emergency Response Team from the Office of Radiation and Indoor Air - Las Vegas (ORIA-LV) are operating air samplers around the area. Since there is no fire or plume from any radioactive area, the locations of the samplers are based on population centers and other criteria. Tribal lands including pueblos and sacred areas are a concern and air samplers are strategically placed to collect data there. Samples will be sent to laboratories to determine the concentration and activity. Among the parameters analyzed for are gross alpha radiation, gross beta radiation, a gamma scan, and specific isotopes that are or were at LANL.

The samples will be shipped for laboratory analysis as soon as practical but there is a need to allow the naturally occurring isotopes with short half-lives time to disappate. This includes naturally occurring radon, radioactive carbon, etc; The radioactive carbon is the result of the burning of trees in the wildfire. Trees naturally have radioactive carbon. These isotopes must disappate before the isotopes of concern can be identified and quantified. So, the delivery of the sample results is delayed due to the necessary step. There are also some analytical test methods that require even longer times for the sample to be prepared for measurement.

The EPA ASPECT plane has completed flying four missions over the perimeter of the fire area. These areas include: LANL, the cities of White Rock, Los Alamos, Espanola, Cuba, Jemez Springs, Toas, Abiquie and the pueblos of Jemez and Cochiti. Monitoring data is being provided to New Mexico Environment Department for public health review and assessment. All results

have shown no significant departures from background levels. Based on the results of the overflights, the OSC in conjunction with NMED have determined that no additional overflights are necessary and ASPECT is being demobilized.

EPA sampling information will be made publically available on the New Mexico Environmental Department website at <http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us> .

## **2.2 Planning Section**

### **2.2.1 Anticipated Activities**

Continue air sampling activities at air sampling locations around the perimeter of the fire on private and pueblo lands.

Demobilize ASPECT on 07/02/11

#### **2.2.1.1 Planned Response Activities**

The fire is being contained and is presenting a much lower apparent threat to LANL. The 'black areas' and fire breaks that have been created since the Cerro Grande fire from 11 years ago have been effective in protecting the LANL property. Fires crews have been aggressive with "back burns" and "available fuel (brush) burning" in the canyons around Los Alamos. The State is proceeding with the development of re-population plans for Los Alamos. No date of re-population has been confirmed to date. Best estimate is currently, 07/04.

As the threat of the fire impacting LANL appears to be waning, the EPA OSC has coordinated with LANL and DOE-RAP, in conjunction with NMED for a coordinated federal air sampling exit strategy. All air sampling activities will conclude with the collection of samples on 07/05/11. All EPA assets remaining in the area will demob on 07/06/11. T

## **2.3 Logistics Section**

No information available at this time.

## **2.4 Finance Section**

No information available at this time.

## **2.5 Other Command Staff**

### **2.5.1 Safety Officer**

### **2.6 Liaison Officer**

### **2.7 Information Officer**

#### **2.7.1 Public Information Officer**

**MEDIA ADVISORY: LANL Announces New Hours of Operation for Joint Information Center in Santa Fe**

will respond to inquiries regarding the Las Conchas Fire from the general public and the media from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. MDT daily.

The JIC is located at the Regional Development Corporation, 2209 Miguel Chavez Rd., in Santa Fe.

**Media should call 505-820-1226 for updates and monitor and monitor**

[www.nmfireinfo.com](http://www.nmfireinfo.com) for official fire updates.

### **3. Participating Entities**

No information available at this time.

### **4. Personnel On Site**

EPA Resources: 1 Federal On-Scene Coordinators.  
1 RERT On-Site Commander from ORIA-LV  
6 members of the EPA RERT  
1 EPA PIO (demobed 07/02)  
1 EPA ASPECT plane and crew (demobed 07/02)  
EPA ASPECT Support Team Members (demobing 07/03)  
1 EPA Data Manager  
4 START contractor personnel

### **5. Definition of Terms**

No information available at this time.

### **6. Additional sources of information**

No information available at this time.

### **7. Situational Reference Materials**

No information available at this time.